

James Kirkham

1850-1950 Centennial Biography

James Kirkham, son of many activities in Utah's development was born August 28, 1849, in London, England, a son of George William Kirkham and Mary Ann Astington.

With his parents, he came to America arriving in Salt Lake City, September 18, 1859. The family first lived to what is now known as Sugar House. Soon after they moved to Lehi where the Kirkham family made their permanent home.

As a boy of nine years, he played a concertina, while Professor Beesley played the violin, furnishing music for the pioneers to dance at night when they were crossing the plains.

As a young man he played parts on the stage of the old Salt Lake Theater. He also played in the orchestra there.

James Kirkham helped build the first railroad through Echo Canyon. He was entertained by Fox Film Company when their picture, "The Iron Horse" gave a preview showing in Salt Lake City. He was one who helped build the great transcontinental railway.

When the celebration was held at Promontory Point for the connecting of the east and west divisions of this great railway, James Kirkham sang a song he had composed while working on this railway.

He taught school at Fort Herriman, Salt Lake County. For several years, he was in the mercantile business with his sons in Lehi. He was active in Church affairs and held many positions and was made a patriarch. He was tithing clerk for the old Lehi Ward under Bishop Thomas R. Cutler for more than seventeen years. He went to England, his native country for a missionary for the Latter-Day Saint Church.

December 18, 1873, James Kirkham married Martha Mercer, daughter of John and Ann Capstick Mercer. Their children are James Mercer, Mary Ann Anderson, Francis Washington, Oscar Ammon, Myrtle Fitzgerald, Eva who died at age fourteen, Ebenezer John, and Elizabeth Jane who died in her infancy. Martha Mercer died November 20, 1890.

He also married Emma Wooten, daughter of Thomas and Ruth Smuin Wooten. Their children are Albert Wooten, Richard Astington, Aurther Jesse, Milo Franklin, Rose Winnifred Thomas, Wanda Emma, Ruth Ester Smellie, and Florence Luella, who died and infant. Emma Wooten Kirkham died April 22, 1926.

His third marriage was to Miriam Adams Eckles.

James Kirkham was a veteran of the Blackhawk Indian Wars. He liked to travel and made a trip to Europe, visiting many countries. He crossed the Atlantic five times. He was a member and Secretary of the old Brass Band, and Kirkham Brothers quadrille band.

For a time, he made his home in Raymond, Canada, and was postmaster while living there. He was town marshal for Lehi at one time.

In the later years, he moved to Salt Lake City, and was for several years, gatekeeper for the Salt Lake Temple.

He was eighty years of age, within a few days, when he died.

James Kirkham was honest, courteous, and charitable to all. He loved the Church and lived its teachings.

As a patriarch, his life reached its best expressions in blessing hundreds.

